

budget, which was put together by Republicans and Democrats in this U.S. Senate.

I had the privilege of voting for two budgets, the Democrat budget and the bipartisan budget. I did not vote for the Republican budget. Although many people's eyes glaze over when you talk about the budget, it is really a very simple document when you think about it. It is a statement of our priorities, and a statement, really, of what we think we ought to be doing as a nation, just as we and our families will determine every year what our priorities are, where we will spend our dollars. We do that here.

One would think that the cold war had not ended if you look at this budget. That is what is so terribly confusing to me, because we know we have to be lean in this budget. We know we are not doing as much for education as we would like. We are not doing as much to clean up the environment as we would like, at least most of us. We are certainly not doing enough health research as we would like.

Every dollar that we can find to make these investments is a dollar, I think, that is well spent when we make them. Yet, we have this Republican Senate and House throwing \$12 billion more at the Pentagon than they asked for in budget authority. That, to me, is nonsensical.

We need the strongest military in the world, and we have it, and we will always have it. We do not need to throw dollars that the generals and the admirals do not want. What is the point of it? It is wasting money, money that we need elsewhere, money that could even reduce the deficit further.

To me, it is not a close call as far as how I will vote. The Republican budget left the Senate, and I think the priorities were out of whack. Too many cuts in Medicare, too many cuts in Medicaid, too many cuts in education, too many cuts in the environment, and too much spending on the Pentagon—more than they asked for. It is something I hope that the American people will look at, because it is not pie-in-the-sky and it is not rhetoric. It is not politics. It is budgeting. It is hard dollars that will go to pay for what the American people need to have.

Mr. President, we do have an election coming up in November. Frankly, I think a lot of these issues will be issues in that election. I can think of no greater honor than to serve on the Budget Committee. When I was in the House, I spent 6 years there, and here in the U.S. Senate I am finishing the fourth. To me, it is one of the most important things that I do, because the hopes and dreams of American people, their aspirations, are really contained in that budget.

All you have to do is look at education, and see how the Republicans are slashing it, to understand that will translate into fewer scholarships for our young people to go to college, fewer slots that can be filled in Head

Start so our kids can get off to a good start on a level playing field, fewer ways to clean up Superfund sites. Frankly, in California, we have many that are languishing and are dangerous, with toxins seeping into water supplies, because we do not have enough resources there.

This is the greatest Nation in the world. We can do better.

The Democratic budget, the Clinton budget, the bipartisan budget, I think all of those are quite mainstream in their approach, compared to this budget that is before the Senate today. We do not have to hurt our seniors the way they will be hurt with this. We do not have to hurt our children the way they will be hurt with this.

Now we have a whole new idea. We will go back to star wars. We will build a full star wars. I think we ought to prepare, in case we have to. We should do all the research. I have always taken that position. But to get ready to deploy a star wars system—we will be facing that in the defense bill—it will cost us billions of dollars, billions of dollars, when we do not even know exactly what we need to do, and we are being told the threat is not defined yet. It just does not make sense.

I submit, Mr. President, if you went to a supermarket or shopping center in Tennessee, or I went to one in California, or my friend went to one in Nebraska, and you said to the person who was coming in to do his shopping: Out of these few things, which do you feel most threatened by, crime in the street and that you might get mugged or attacked, or somebody in your family getting breast cancer or prostate cancer, or a ballistic missile coming over and hitting you in your house? I honestly think that people would say we should have the strongest military in the world, but the threats that are facing me are absolutely that someone in my family would get such a dreadful disease or that, yes, someone could be a victim of a crime. Yet, you look at this budget and it has the opposite kind of priorities.

So I thank my friend from Nebraska for his leadership, his very down-to-earth Nebraska leadership. I will sorely miss it next year. I think he stands for mainstream America in his opposition to this budget.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this budget. It got worse when it went into conference. It has more of the NEWT GINGRICH approach to budgeting, and I frankly think we ought to vote "no."

I yield the floor at this time.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I want to briefly thank my dear friend and colleague from California. I said earlier that she is a valuable member of the Budget Committee, and her earlier training over on the House side has served her and us well. She is very consistent and tender, one who becomes involved in the details of the budget process. It has been a great pleasure for me to see this relatively new Senator

come in and take her place as a very influential member of the Budget Committee. I thank her for her kind remarks.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now move off of the budget temporarily and return to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. EXON. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMPSON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

A NEW CHANCE FOR PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. PELL. Mr. President, I welcome the news that negotiations on Northern Ireland are back on course. Fractious though they might be, the talks involving the British and Irish Governments, as well as representatives of Northern Ireland's political parties, offer hope to all of us who long for a permanent peace in Northern Ireland.

The talks, which opened Monday, had hit a significant impasse over the role of our former colleague George Mitchell, who was chosen by the British and Irish Governments to chair the negotiating sessions. Due to the courage shown by all those involved, but particularly Prime Minister Major and Unionist leader David Trimble, the impasse has been resolved and a possible deadlock has been averted. The talks will proceed with Senator Mitchell at the helm.

I regret that there are still some Unionists, however, who object to Senator Mitchell's chairmanship, for the sole purpose, I suspect, of obstructing the peace process. Having served with George Mitchell for many years in the Senate, I can personally attest to his even-handed and judicious approach to the issues. Here in the Senate, he was admired by members of both parties for his ability to build bridges and cut across partisan lines. George Mitchell is quite frankly, one of the most fair-minded individuals with whom I have had the pleasure of working.

Senator Mitchell has already demonstrated great wisdom and balance with regard to the peace process in Northern Ireland. In January, Senator Mitchell issued an excellent report examining the link between the decommissioning of weapons and all-party talks. As head of the international body charged with studying this issue, Senator Mitchell drew upon his background as a judge. He did an excellent